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Bristol Post Business Awards

Coffee roaster is no Johnny come latte-ly

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LONG before a group of Seattle hippies made coffee cool, one Bristol family was already grinding out a decent living. Starbucks served its first latte in 1984 and opened its first branch in the UK in 1988.

The Carwardine family, however, started selling coffee in Bristol back in 1861.

Five generations later, in 1991 Martin Carwardine decided to take his experience in the retail side of the business and branch out into wholesale to the hospitality industry. He later added selling and servicing coffee machines to the offer.

Now his company Martin Carwardine and Company Coffee Roaster is celebrating 25 years in business.

"The coffee landscape was very different to today," said Martin. "We would never have heard of Starbucks, coffee pods, flat whites or skinny lattes."

"Tea was the national hot beverage of choice, however it was at around this time that instant coffee sales would start to decline as the demand for premium coffee started to emerge."

"This trend was to continue and accelerate and the coffee market is now more than ten times the size of the early nineties. Bristolians will remember the days when coffee shops were rare with only Carwardine's Coffee Houses offering the chance to sit down and enjoy fresh coffee, with the smell of beans being roasted wafting down the street."

"What a different landscape today with a meteoric rise in the number of shops and the quality available to a much more demanding and discerning cafe culture."

"I am proud to continue the tradition of hand roasting premium coffee,"



fee, a tradition which started with my great, great grandfather Edmund in 1861. Stepping out of his doorstep in Hotwells, what a different place Bristol would have looked then with clip-

pers unloading their cargo right into the centre of the city."

The firm, based in Langford, North Somerset, believes to get the best out of their coffee machines its custom-

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Left, Martin Carwardine; above, Carwardine's coffee shop, 56 Corn Street, in the 1960s

ers need to be properly trained. That's why it offers free barista training.

It's one of the reasons the firm has entered the Customer Service category at the Bristol Post Business Awards.

The awards, held in association with the University of the West of England, celebrate the achievements of businesses across the Post readership area.

Martin said: "Since inception it's

been obvious that, as well as service support, barista training would be required in order to enable our customers to be able to enjoy their coffee and coffee making equipment to its fullest and be commercially successful."

"The decision was made to include a policy of unlimited, on-going, free barista training as part of our rental package."

Martin said the approach had fostered long-term customer relationships, with some of the firm's rental partners having been with them for a decade.

"They know that they can request a visit from one of our barista training staff whenever they have a group of new recruits, to ensure the standard of quality they serve remains the same," he said.

"Consistently great quality coffee means returning customers, which in turn keeps our customers ordering coffee."

The Bristol Post Business Awards take place at Ashton Gate Stadium on June 29. Order tickets online at www.bristolpost.co.uk/businessawards.